DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 027 349 UD 007 681

Neighborhood Youth Corps From Welfare to Wages.
Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.
Report No-DOLP-6
Note-6p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
Descriptors-*Disadvantaged Youth, Dropout Programs, Educational Programs, *Federal Programs, *Poverty Programs, *Work Study Programs, Youth Programs
Identifiers-Neighborhood Youth Corps, NYC

The methods and objectives of the Neighborhood Youth Corps are described in anecdotal form. Brief case studies illustrate various facets of this federal work-study program. (NH)

ED027349

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

07681 E

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CORPS

FROM WELFARE TO WAGES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROGRAM REPORT No. 6

UD 007 681

NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CORPS

FROM WELFARE TO WAGES

A teenage boy leans intently over his microscope. He dissects, with assurance and skill, a small animal believed to have had rabies.

The boy is Royzelle Lowe. Only a few months ago, like his seven brothers and sisters, he was living on welfare in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. His family eked out an existence on public assistance funds. With limited education and no skills, Royzelle faced a bleak future.

Today, thanks to the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Royzelle is permanently employed as a laboratory aide in the Atlanta Health Department. He is no longer on welfare.

For him, the Neighborhood Youth Corps meant learning skills, earning wages, and a start in a promising career.

Youngsters like Royzelle, from families on welfare, account for more than a quarter of all Neighborhood Youth Corps enrollees.

Their success stories mark one of the most dramatic breaks in America's cycle of poverty.

Each youngster who gets a job, or goes on with his education after Neighborhood Youth Corps work-training, can mean one less adult on welfare----the adult he or she would probably have become.

This is going on all over the United States.

UD 007 681

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, where the Community Health and Welfare Council sponsors an in-school NYC project, all but five percent of the enrollees went from high school into jobs, to vocational schools, or to college----on scholarship.

While they were completing a high school education, these boys and girls worked and earned wages at 95 different work stations in the city of Minneapolis----including the Minneapolis General Hospital and the Veterans' Administration Hospital.

Sue Peterson was one of them.

She was only 16 when she joined the Neighborhood Youth Corps (the in-school program opens up to enrollees at age 14). Her family had been on welfare for more than six years.

Sue was assigned to the Minneapolis General Hospital----her first job. She worked for one and a half years there, while completing her education at Vocational High School.

In the hospital's personnel department, Sue not only earned wages of $1.25 an hour---standard for NYC jobs---but found a sympathetic supervisor. She developed a new understanding of correct business procedure, and her appearance and grooming improved with good guidance, and her own increased self-esteem.

This year, after graduation from high school, the hospital decided to hire Sue permanently, as a full-time clerk in the X-ray department. She now works eight hours a day, at a starting pay of $281 a month.

Her family no longer needs, or receives, as much welfare money. Sue's contribution to the family income, while an NYC enrollee, helped pay for clothes for herself, and her younger brother and sisters. Now, welfare authorities can scale down monthly payments to the Peterson family.

The effect is spreading. Sue's younger sister, who wishes to become a nurse, will also join the Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Corps ----which enrolled 750 students in 1965, and counted 500 in 1967, through the summer.

Funds invested in youth through the Neighborhood Youth Corps---90% supported by the Federal Government under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964---bring quick returns.

Every unemployed, undereducated youngster who becomes a job holder or continues his education to the "hiring point" reduces the need for government welfare spending.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps, by helping youngsters prepare adequately for permanent employment, opens up the chance of a lifetime ---the chance to do worthwhile work in their own communities, while becoming partially or wholly self-supporting.

Last summer, for example, twenty-five enrollees in Chicago conducted surveys in slums, helping the Department of Public Aid evaluate the housing problems of families on public assistance.

Solving very real problems at home, they also set about solving their own personal difficulties.

Typically, through the Neighborhood Youth Corps, the dropout whose environment was chiefly the ghetto street corner, or the neighborhood poolroom---whose livelihood was Aid to Dependent Children---becomes a useful, wage-earning member of society. Importantly, he becomes a source of pride in his neighborhood, and begins to take pride in himself.

Whether in or out of school he gets a first-hand taste of the world of worthwhile endeavor, under the guidance of understanding counselors.

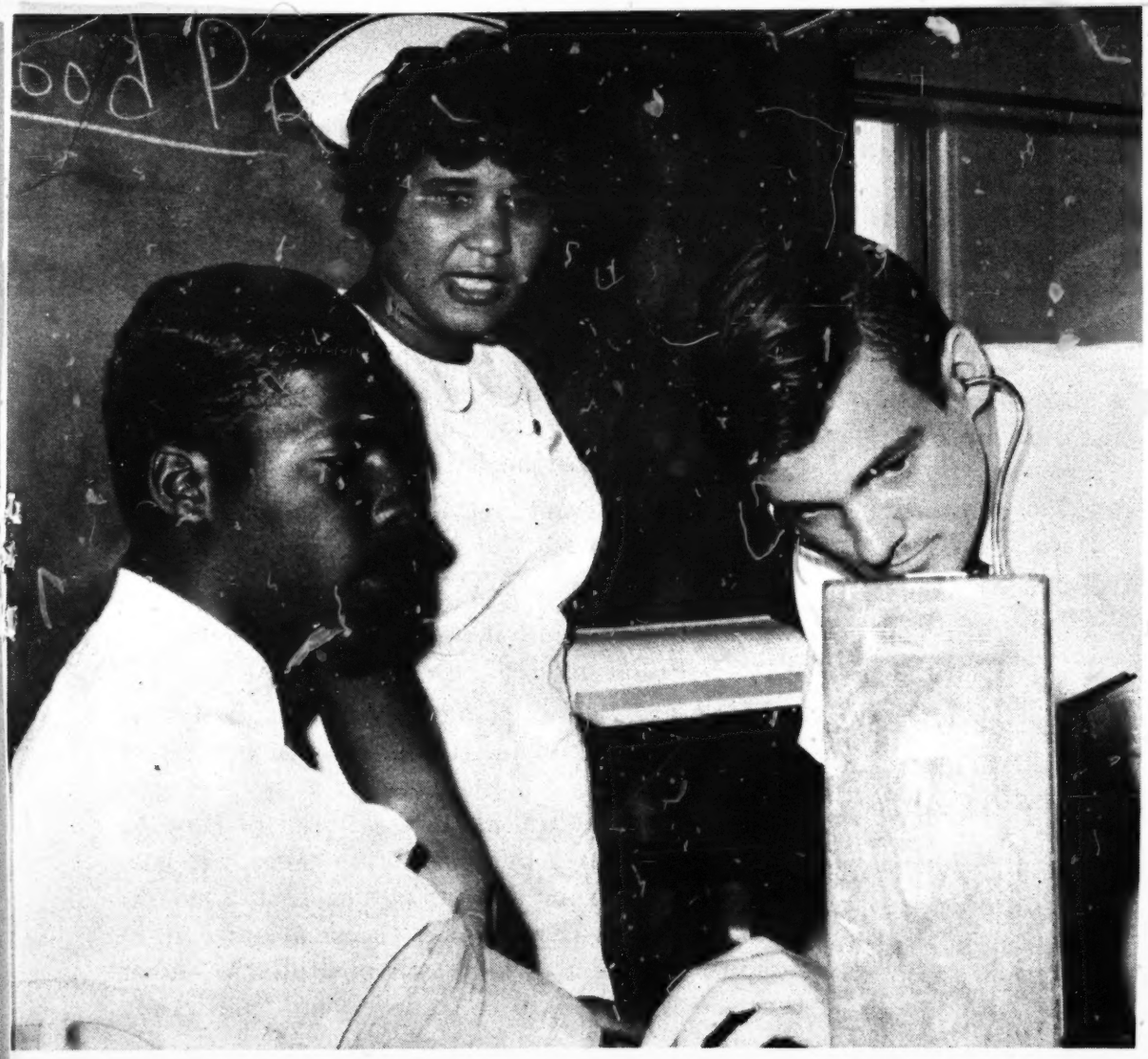
Often, NYC jobs present the first real opportunity for these boys and girls---all of them from poor homes, many from broken homes, most of them culturally deprived---to give their lives a purpose. NYC tasks involve important and otherwise undone work in hospitals, libraries, government agencies, parks, playgrounds, etc., in the enrollee's home community.

More than the individual NYC enrollee is affected.

A number of NYC enrollees help support younger brothers or sisters. Others have a child or children of their own.

Seventeen-year-old Vicki Cooper, of Portland, Oregon, was separated from her husband. Until she joined the Neighborhood Youth Corps, she required welfare assistance for herself and her 15-month-old child---and was unhappily working in a job which brought no satisfactions.

Through the Neighborhood Youth Corps, she was able to finish high school and pass the General Education Test, while working as a secretary-trainee in a church community action program.



She is now about to enter an MDTA program for 9 months' training as a digital computer operator.

Her pride was restored with her change in jobs. The difference, she explains, is that "NYC is like a job you would have any place else"---without the stigma of welfare.

In Jacksonville, Florida, another NYC job, leading to full-time employment at $220 a month, has enabled an 18-year-old unwed mother of two to take her small children off welfare.

A dropout in the 11th grade, her limited education handicapped her in finding work.

Her NYC job enabled her to return to high school at night, and after a year, she was ready for her present position as a laboratory aide with the State Board of Health. If her progress continues, and she becomes a laboratory technician, her earnings will rise to $600. Her children will be able to grow up without "welfare".

One of the most praiseworthy features of the Neighborhood Youth Corps is that enrollees not only train to get jobs, but learn to keep them.

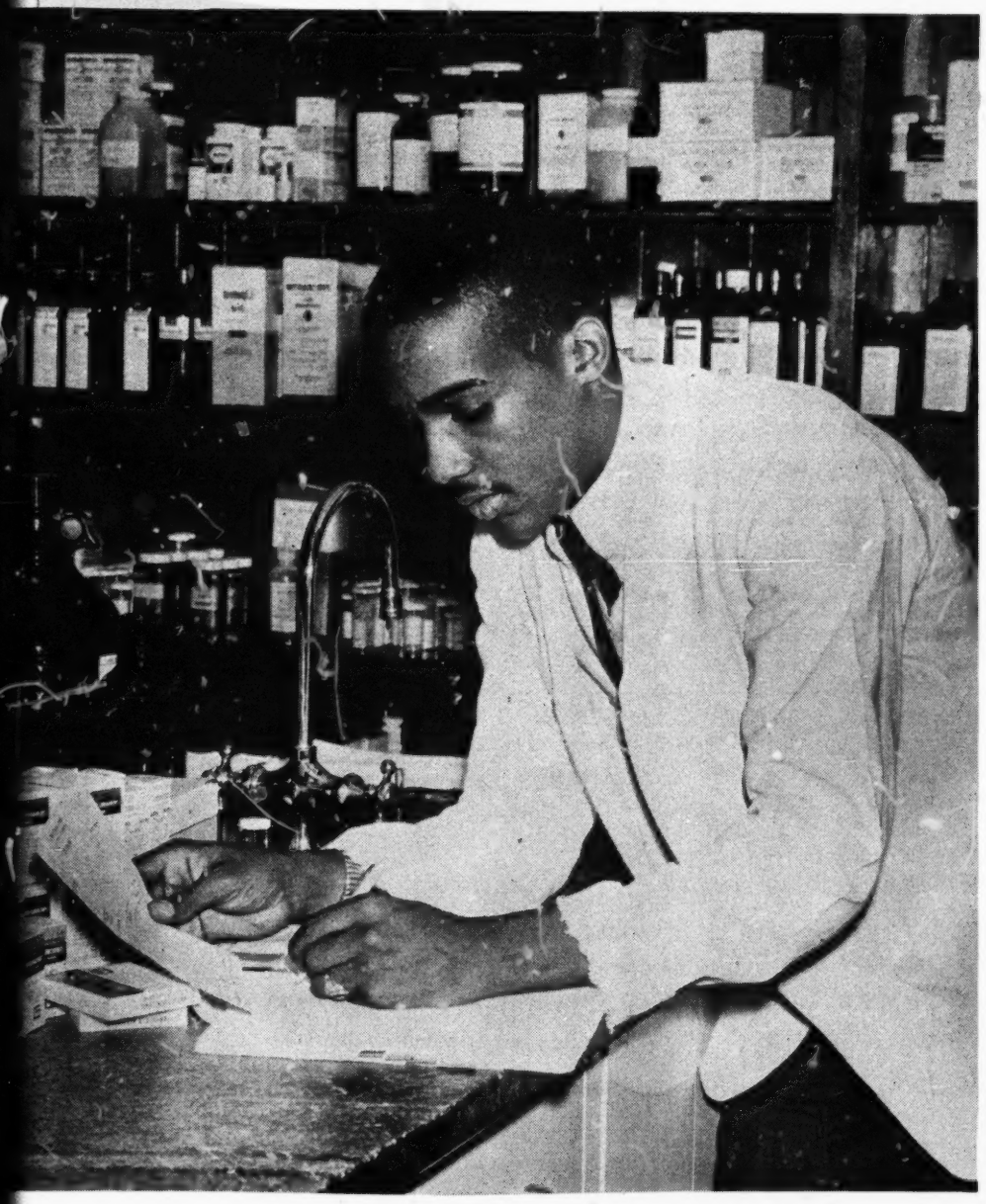
A study conducted at an NYC project in Portland shows that none of the "welfare" enrollees who were graduated from NYC to permanent jobs--they represented 90% of all enrollees at this project--have had to return to public assistance.

The Portland project was aimed at out-of-school youngsters. Most of the enrollees had dropped out of high school because of illness, pregnancy, or a general inability to fit into the educational system.

Such youngsters--discouraged at the start--are usually the most difficult to work with. Hardened by ghetto living, suspicious of "middle-class" values, they are slow to believe that anyone really wants to help them. And contrary to general belief, they are often deeply ashamed of being on welfare, and embittered by being caught in a trap which seems to offer no way out.

Neighborhood Youth Corps *does* offer a way out.

One lad in Portland with nine brothers and sisters--all on welfare when an injury pre-



vented their father from working---dropped out of school when his own illness--and absence--made him lag behind his class. Through the Neighborhood Youth Corps, he was able to get a job, contribute to the family's finances, and reduce the necessary welfare allowance. His first job after NYC was at a service station---where he added to his knowledge of mechanics. Then, in May of this year, he moved into a $2.00 an hour position as apprentice upholsterer for industrial equipment. He will earn more when he masters the skills. And there is every indication that from now on, he will be a steady worker.

The satisfaction of being on a ladder, with a visible way to go up, is one of the intrinsic and lasting benefits of NYC training. Unemployment, with subsistence support doled out instead of being earned---or a menial job, with no future---saps the ambition of disadvantaged youth. It contributes to a way of life that admittedly is going nowhere.

But a job that enables a youngster to finish his education, or train for skills, reinforced with counselling in standard employer expectations (as to personality, appearance, office routine, etc.), opens up a whole new future.

"I used to hang around and jive with the guys," was the way one NYC graduate, Frank Hall, of Jacksonville, puts it. "I didn't think anyone would hire me."

He had dropped out of school in the 10th grade.

Someone in his neighborhood mentioned the Neighborhood Youth Corps, however, and that was all Frank needed. He signed up.

At his NYC work station, the Board of Health, he learned plaster and brick work, and how to repair air conditioners.

After fifteen months at the Board of Health, he qualified for a permanent job there. It was in the maintenance department, at $250 a month.

With part of that money, Frank attends night school, aiming at a high school diploma. After that, he wants to go to trade school, and study air conditioning and heating.

The further training will take another year, but to Frank, it's worth the effort. He has learned to develop natural skills into a trade ---and he knows he's on the way up.

Earning money is such a new experience for some Neighborhood Youth Corps youths that the NYC has to help them learn to handle it.

In the Atlanta, Georgia, NYC project, a banker shows enrollees how to open checking accounts ---something none of them had ever done before. (Only one of the 80 youngsters enrolled had ever had a savings account.) An accountant teaches them how to make out appropriate household budgets.

Enrollees now save hours of time---time they formerly spent paying bills with cash, in person.

And there are even more "extras" to help youngsters become employable.

An employment expert explains to enrollees how to go about looking for a job, and a fashion model lectures on proper clothing and makeup. To increase their general knowledge, enrollees are taken to museums and art galleries, and to the state legislature.

As their outlook broadens, disadvantaged boys and girls gradually cease to identify themselves with the "losers"---and realize that

they are capable of competing in the job market with youngsters for whom cultural advantages are taken for granted.

Welfare, for some, was a matter of "inherited poverty." Poverty and welfare payments had gone on for generations. It became the expected.

In Jacksonville, Earlene Hill expected to be part of the cycle that made public assistance funds a necessity for her grandparents, her mother, and her eight brothers and sisters (whose father was missing).

Her job in a laundry brought in little in wages. But as an 11th grade dropout, she feared she could do no better.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps opened up an opportunity she thought would never be possible.

"He said he'd pay me and let me go back to school at the same time," she marvelled of the project director. "I couldn't believe it, but it was true."

Earlene became a nurse's aide at the Hebrew Home for the Aged. Authorities there held her job even when she became ill and had to drop out of vocational school for six months. When she graduated, she was taken on full-time. She married this year a young man working as a press machine operator at the Athens Steel Company---and she wants to go back to school to become a registered nurse.

Grandparents to mother to daughter. The chain of welfare payments appeared to go on and on.

But with Earlene, the chain snapped. From an immature, discouraged, disadvantaged girl, Earlene, through Neighborhood Youth Corps training, has become a responsible, cheerful, and grateful young woman.

She is employable---and employed.

Like hundreds of other disadvantaged youngsters, she found in the Neighborhood Youth Corps a happy ending---an ending to welfare.

She also found a new beginning.